

NSC BRIEFING

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BACKGROUND DATA ON BELGIAN CONGO

I. Population:

13,300,000 of whom 92,000 Europeans (80% Belgian) and 11,000 Asians, etc. (Trust territory of Ruanda-Urundi has an additional 4,500,000.)

II. Area:

904,000 square miles; Ruanda-Urundi 19,536 square miles. (Large as US East of Mississippi.)

III. Political:

There are no political parties since there is no effective participation of either Europeans or Africans in the local government. Rule is from Brussels through the appointed Governor General. There is a consultative council representing the major social and economic groups in the Congo--both African and European--but it is purely advisory. In late 1957 the bare beginning of municipal elections in 3 Congo cities were undertaken but under carefully controlled conditions with virtually complete veto control retained by Belgian authorities in Leopoldville.

IV. Economy:

The Congo is a rich area--one of the richest in Africa--and it owes its economic development almost entirely to Belgian enterprise. Para-statal corporations have been given extensive monopolies of a geographic or functional nature and have squeezed out the small business interests when any clash of interests developed.

A. Mineral rich, the Congo produces about 75% of the Free World's cobalt, 70% of its industrial diamonds, 7% of its copper and 9% of its tin. It is also an important source of cadmium, gold,

manganese, silver, zinc tungsten, and of uranium although production of this latter commodity has declined seriously in recent years because of exhaustion of rich deposits. (US receiving *practically no Congo uranium*).

- B. The Congo has equally valuable agricultural production; cotton, coffee and palm oil.
- C. The US imports about 15-20% of the Congo's exports (most go to Belgium) and supplies about 20% of Congo's imports largely machinery, trucks, gasoline, Only a small portion of the \$3,000,000,000 invested by outsiders in the Congo has come from the US, but Brussels is now bidding for American investment in the contemplated hydroelectric power development on the Congo River at Inga which would total about \$3,000,000,000 when completed. The Congo supplies major percentages of American imports of cobalt, diamond bort, tantalum and palm oil.

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